United States Army Chaplain Center and School

THE MILITARY'S PROTESTANT UNIFIED CURRICULUM: CHOOSE, CHANGE OR CHECK?

C22-B-19 Techniques of Research
December 3, 1973
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PREFACE

This paper will attempt to deal with the strengths and weaknesses of the Unified Protestant Sunday School Curriculum. In moving toward this goal, a brief examination of the needs and development will be shown; a survey will draw from the attitudes and feelings of chaplains and their wives concerning the Unified materials; and the final area of the paper will make an attempt at evaluation and recommendation if that appears called for in the study.

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INTRODUCTION

One does not have to be in the military service long before the conspicuous differences from civilian parish activities are evident. J.M. Baily states one such problem well when he says, "The turnover among the pupils made teaching with any kind of continuity almost like preaching as the regiment marched past in review."[1] The teaching staff in an average civilian church school has a 33% yearly turnover. The military teaching staff has an annual turnover of 75%. Yes, the problems are unique. The Unified Protestant Sunday School Curriculum has been one way the military has attempted to deal with some of the uniqueness.

This writer has received a baccalaureate degree with a major in religious education. During that course of study, curriculum was an important area of examination. With seven years in military service as a chaplain, many opportunities have occurred to examine and use the material and also to observe other teachers and their reactions to this material. This assigned project has therefore been approached with much interest.

I. DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNIFIED PROTESTANT SUNDAY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Toward the close of World War II, peacetime forces were being accompanied by their families. By 1950, it was estimated that 150,000 pupils were attending the Protestant military Sunday schools. There was no coordination of materials. In some cases, eighteen different selections of materials

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[1]J.M. Baily, "At Their Finger Tips," The Chaplain, Vol. 16, No. 7, December 1959, p. 1.

were being used as each school and teacher within the school went his or her own way. Sunday school needs in a post Protestant Sunday school are quite different from the normal civilian denominational Sunday school. More than a dozen denominations will likely be represented in a given military Sunday school. There is a constant changing of staff and pupils as families are reassigned to new locations. A student's time on a given post has been estimated to be approximately eighteen months. The need was obvious. Some type of unified curriculum was needed that would provide a balance and be acceptable by the many denominations within the military.

The Armed Forces Chaplain Board (AFCB) united with the Protestant Church-owned Publishers Association (PCPA) to lay the ground work for selection and distribution of curriculum. The PCPA is a Protestant association of twenty-five publishing agency representatives. As the ground work was laid, it was felt that selection of denominational materials would have to be representative of the denominations and reflect the main stream faith.

The AFCB selected consultants on the basis of experience and performance. The PCPA provided a council to represent itself. These consultants met on a post with the PCPA council to observe use of materials, confer with chaplains, teachers and students. Both groups reviewed a variety of materials sent by the agency representatives. After review of the materials, selections were made. This same procedure has been continued into the present.

Materials selected by the above mentioned committee are required to follow the standards of the AFCB. Such standards include: materials that contain the great tenants of faith upon which Protestants agree; materials which stress the meaning of the Bible for church school pupils; guidance for those leading class activities and leading groups; materials that stress cooperation between Sunday school and home; materials which are suitably graded to meet the age level of pupils; materials which can be designed for

an orderly movement of pupil from grade to grade; materials which nurture belief and commitment to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit according to the Scriptures, the Church as the fellowship of believers and Jesus Christ; and lastly, materials that keep denominational references to a minimum.[2]

After selection and preparation of materials, two tools are available to help local posts make their selection of the Unified Curriculum. A Prospectus is sent to each chaplain. It describes the basic materials for every age group and suggests aids, audio-visuals, leadership training aids, special reference books and administration supplies. Included with the Prospectus are order blanks for ordering materials either quarterly or annually. The second tool is the Preview. This is a free quarterly magazine published by PCPA providing leadership helps for superintendents, teachers and chaplains. It deals with helps at all age levels, and prepares the various leaders for materials which will be coming to them the next quarter of the Sunday school year. The Unified Protestant Religious Education Curriculum for the Armed Forces began supplying material for military Sunday schools in 1954.

One of the original leaders and consultants who helped find the solution to the above mentioned problem was John Ribble of the Westminster Press, Philadelphia. He was asked why we need a unified curriculum for all the services. His reply was:

> In order to provide the pupils with continuity of study content wherever they might be in a base Sunday school, the easiest thing for the Armed Forces Chaplains Board to have done would have been

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[2] "More Than Moses," The Story of the Unified Protestant Religious Education Curriculum for the Armed Forces (Protestant Publishers Association, 1970). Color slides and tapes produced by the Armed Forces Curriculum Committee of the Protestant Church-Owned Publishers Association in cooperation with the Religious Education Advisory Group of the Armed Forces Chaplains Board.

to recommend a particular curriculum for use everywhere. If one denomination's curriculum were chosen, however, this would not have suited Chaplains coming from all other denominations. The next most practical thing would have been for the services to settle upon a single nondenominational publisher. Those materials which had not been selected for recommendation, would have been up in arms - as would the denominational boards and publishers. . . . Therefore a systematic interdenominational curriculum has been brought together . . . .[3]

This statement, published in 1957, was during a time when 60% of the military schools were using the Unified Curriculum.

II. SURVEY RESULTS OF THE UNIFIED PROTESTANT SUNDAY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

The most significant portion of this report, as this writer perceives it, was involved with a written survey conducted among the Student Detachment, C22 Class of the U.S. Army Chaplain School, Fort Hamilton, and their wives. Seventy-four chaplains and seventy-two chaplains' wives received the one page survey questionaire. Of that number, thirty-eight chaplains and thirty-two wives returned the questionaire to this writer. The information which will be discussed is a compilation of their response to that survey.

The questionaire was based on certain assumptions which will be stated here:

1) That chaplains and their wives would provide the quickest and most accurate source for giving information about the Protestant Unified Curriculum.
2) That questionaires returned anonymously would allow responders to express feelings without fear of negative influences resulting.
3) That chaplains and wives have just returned from positions where they would have been directly or indirectly involved with Sunday schools and curriculum.
4) That many chaplains and wives would not respond to the questionaire in view of mass paper work already obligating their time.
5) That the questionaire had to be prepared so that responses could be given in ways that required little time or thought.
6) That questions asked or not asked reflect some of the feelings and

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[3]John Ripple, "What About the Unified Curriculum?," The Chaplain, Vol. 14, No. 5, October 1957, p.18.

thoughts which this writer brings to the questionaire being distributed.

7) That the chaplains would have more of a theological orientation as they view the material and that their wives would have more of a practical view of the material. The chaplains would have more often been responsible for the administration of the Sunday School while their wives would often have been using the material teaching various classes.

8) That a variety of views would be expected due to the assortment of denominational backgrounds held by chaplains and wives answering the survey.

The responses from the chaplains and wives have been placed side by side so that the similarities and differences can be contrasted. Where it seems significant, this writer will present percentages and draw some conclusions.

1. Have you used the Unified materials?

	Chaplains	Wives
a. Yes	34	26
b. No	4	5
c. No response	-	1

Of the chaplains surveyed, 89% have had direct involvement with the materials and 81% of the reporting wives have used the Unified Curriculum. This high knowledge factor of the material should provide input based on experience.

2. Which curriculum do you personally prefer? (Replies were written in)

	Chaplains	Wives
a. Unified Curriculum	17	8
b. Scripture Press	9	5
c. Gospel Light	6	5
d. Concordia	3	2
e. David C. Cook	2	-
f. Methodist	1	2
g. Child Evangelism	-	1
h. No response	-	9

Of the chaplains, 45% responded in favor of the Unified Curriculum and 26% of the wives. One person listed several companies mentioned above; another chaplain indicated he simply wanted Biblical curriculum materials. Fifty percent of the chaplains and 38% of the wives expressed preference for the same three non-denominational type materials.

3. Dealing with content of the Unified Curriculum, the response was as follows:

	Chaplains	Wives
a. Too liberal	14	13
b. Too experience centered	10	6
c. Too denominational	5	2
d. Too conservative	3	1
e. Too Bible centered	1	1
f. No response	5	9

Of the chaplains, 59% indicated that the Unified Materials are both too liberal and too experience centered. Fifty-nine percent of the wives indicated the same response. A much lesser percentage felt that the material is too conservative or too Bible centered. The denominational factor did not seem to be of great concern with the Unified Curriculum. However, two reactions by wives at this point of the survey were: material is so denominational at times that she would refuse to teach material, and another wife called for more Bible stories, especially for the younger pupils.

4. Is the material easy for the teachers to present?

	Chaplains	Wives
a. Yes	20	14
b. No	10	10
c. No response	8	8

Of the chaplains, 53% felt that teachers could handle the Unified materials easily and 44% of the wives felt this way. This question drew a number of remarks which are listed below:

1) Material well outlined - clear objectives
2) Requires well trained teachers
3) Teachers must add creativity
4) Little preparation needed
5) Too much material to sort through
6) Material not interesting enough to teachers
7) Material too shallow and fragmented
8) Too much detail
9) Teacher has to do so much condensing
10) Material is boring - applications not relevant
11) Visual aids are ineffective
12) Material does not relate to background of teacher's experience
13) Intensive work required to prepare lessons

5. Does the Unified material provide immediate and long range goals?

	Chaplains	Wives
a. Yes	22	14
b. No	8	6
c. No response	8	12

Fifty-eight percent of the chaplains and 44% of the wives feel that the goal setting in the Unified Curriculum deals with both the present and the future.

6. Do you feel the Unified lessons are based too little on Scripture?

	Chaplains	Wives
a. Yes	19	11
b. No	14	12
c. No response	5	9

Of the chaplains, 50% feel the Unified material is not based enough on Scripture, and 34% of the wives feel this way.

7. Do you feel the Unified lessons are based too little on contemporary problems?

	Chaplains	Wives
a. Yes	5	2
b. No	28	21
c. No response	5	9

Seventy-four percent of the chaplains and 66% of the wives feel that Unified materials have enough or too much contemporary emphasis.

8. Which emphasis do you prefer in Curriculum materials?

	Chaplains	Wives
a. Emphasis on Scripture	14	13
b. Emphasis on contemporary	4	2
c. Emphasis on both of above	16	10
d. No response	2	8

Seventy-nine percent of the chaplains and 72% of the wives prefer an emphasis on either Scripture or a combination of Scripture with contemporary application.

9. This response of the questionaire was for alternate ways for providing materials for the Protestant Sunday School if feelings were negative toward the present Unified Curriculum. Random statements are also included.

a. Response of chaplains
   1) Use funds to purchase other materials to supplement the Unified Curriculum.

2) Use an interdenominational source that is more conservative.
3) Set up a basic curriculum that repeats itself every two or three years. A publishing house would produce materials from our master plan.
4) Choice should be made by teaching staff at each local post.
5) Use non-denominational literature throughout military system for continuity.
6) Have the Unified Curriculum come up with a three year cycle of literature.
7) Provide home study in preference to Unified Curriculum.
8) Provide straight Bible history courses for each grade.
9) Get rid of the Sunday School program and have interest groups at all age levels.

b. Response of wives.
1) Use Child Evangelism materials.
2) Let each post have a committee to select their own materials.
3) When Unified materials are not Scriptural, funds should be available to purchase other materials.
4) Post chaplains should jointly decide on which materials to use.
5) No one curriculum is sufficient. However, I've never found one so completely useless that I couldn't adapt portions.
6) Chaplains should insist Unified Curriculum be used.
7) Chaplains should be required to teach material for awhile to get response of pupils.
8) The more concentrated the lessons on Scripture, the greater affect on pupils.
9) Lesson is 90% teacher.
10) In many instances a waste. Too much spent for too little.

One wife who prefers conservative, Bible-centered materials stated the following:

> Before coming into the service, my husband and I taught 5th graders at Camp Leroy Johnson using the material from Gospel Light. The material was excellent and the children were very interested. At our next duty station I taught 7th and 8th graders under the Unified Curriculum from January through March. The children were not as interested as I would have liked so I decided to order material from Gospel Light. I had disciplinary problems even though I had an adult helper to keep order. After switching over to Gospel Light, I had twenty-five quiet teenagers in class just about every Sunday and I no longer needed a helper. The change was due entirely to the change in lesson material.

III. EVALUATION

In the following statements, attempts will be made to draw some conclusions from information gained through historical research and survey. There is no pretense made that the statements will be conclusive. A higher

percentage of the chaplains (45%) prefer the Unified Curriculum than agree on any other approach to the unique problem of curriculum supplies within the highly mobile military Sunday schools. This may be more a consideration of the practical nature of being able to once for all settle the issue of what and where to get material. This observation is made in view of the distinctly lower percentage among wives (25%). The wives are most likely to have been the ones using the material and thus offering the most significant feelings as to preference. The highest percentage of unhappiness with Unified materials had to do with it being either too liberal or too experience centered. This seemed consistent with the responses that 79% of the chaplains and 72% of the wives wanted the material to emphasize Scripture or Scripture with practical application.

The basic value for a Unified Curriculum, from the results of the survey, seems to have strong support. The high mobility of pupil and teacher requires a realistic recognition of the problems among military personnel. An appreciation of the attempt not to offend by drawing from many sources is evidenced as fair play and seems like a reasonable solution. It is this "being all things to all men" that may in actuality speak to the heart of the basic problem.

This writer sees the problem as perhaps one in which a teacher is faced frequently with changing format/style and procedures of presentation to teacher and pupil. The responding chaplain's wife who said, "The material doesn't relate to background of my experience," was speaking of the format change. If the changing style of material bothers the chaplain and wife who are trained in curriculum materials, what must the problem be for the average untrained military Sunday school worker.

The solution to this problem, as this writer sees it, is not to let each select his own preference of materials. This simply puts the military

Sunday school back at the mercy of denominational bias and confusions for the mobile religious community. A select board of writers should be contracted. They could devise a curriculum for the military which would take in the following:

a. Materials which would strongly emphasize traditional Scriptural teaching. (This would, in fact, be where most of the military community is.)

b. Prepare material and lessons which would follow a similar pattern of presentation for teachers to follow in perhaps a five-year cycle. (Once a teacher did learn how to handle the materials, she would feel comfortable with succeeding lesson materials. Longer cycle would allow greater planning and preparation.)

c. Material should not be geared for dynamic teachers who prepare all week long for a lesson but rather easy to use material for new and busy teachers with advanced supplements for more skilled or proficient teachers. (Ideas from companies such as Gospel Light or Scripture Press may provide ready reference in how to accomplish this.)

d. Material would need to be updated periodically for more current application of Scriptural material.

e. Emphasis on use of the new curriculum should have the same encouragement and policy as the present Unified Curriculum.

f. Various military Sunday schools with proper storage methods would be able to reuse some material in the cycle, hopefully saving money.

CONCLUSION

The research involved in this project has served to point out to this writer the need for a unified curriculum in the military Sunday schools. A reasonable attempt was made at satisfying that need with the Unified Curriculum. It seems evident from the survey questionaires that major dissatisfaction still exists but now for a different reason. The pre-1954 days presented curriculum chaos. After the introduction of the Unified Curriculum, the attitude seems to be curriculum dissatisfaction. This writer's recommendation is to move the military along in the development of a Protestant military curriculum with a professional staff of writers

following a basic format in a five-year cycle. Until that time, the Unified Curriculum should continue to be the recommended source of use. As one responder to the questionnaire stated, the lesson is 90% teacher.

APPENDIX

Historical Research on Reactions
to the Unified Curriculum

A. The Historical Review from the Office of the Chief of Chaplains, July 1, 1962 to June 30, 1963 edition, noted that a decline in the number of complaints was received at the Chief's office. Their conclusion was that chaplains and posts were making efforts to accomodate the curriculum. One major complaint that was noted in this same article was made by Lieutenant General William K. Harrison, USA-Ret. As president of the Officers' Christian Union of the United States, he spoke of the concern of his organization's council that the chiefs of the military chaplains were exercising ecclesiastical authority over all chaplains of different Protestant denominations in matters theological. The issue he raised was the reported one of making mandatory the use of Sunday school teaching materials prescribed by the chiefs. He raised the question of the violation of the Constitution in forcing their particular brand of theology and church polity on chaplains and teachers. General Harrison indicated that it might be necessary to appeal the chiefs' actions to Federal Courts but expressed a hope in not having to follow this course.

The Chief of Chaplains rejected General Harrison's charge. He indicated that the curriculum being critized was a "comprehensive, positive, and Bible-oriented program of instruction which encompasses the broad currents of Protestant tradition and positively sets forth the fundamental religious principles and teachings familiar and common to the vast majority of Protestants in the Armed Forces."[4] He also made it clear that the use

[4]Historical Review, July 1, 1962 to June 30, 1963, p. 82.

of the Unified Curriculum is not required by any Department of the Army regulations or directive but that he does encourage use of the Unified Curriculum. His concluding statement in the published report is that all religious education programs, both general and denominational, are under control of the local commander.

B. The July 1, 1963 to June 30, 1964 edition of the Office of the Chief of Chaplains Historical Review stated the problem raised by the National Association of Evangelicals. The N.A.E. charged that chaplains in the military are required to use religious education materials which contain heresy. The specific complaint had to do with statements in materials for teachers of junior high school pupils. Such statements, they indicated, advised the teachers to help pupils differentiate between what was legendary and what was historical material in Scripture.

The Armed Forces Chaplains Board replied to this charge by asserting that no chaplain is compelled to use the Unified Curriculum material. They indicated that while the Chief of Chaplains recommends the use of the material, any chaplain who objects was free to use other materials.[5]

C. In the July 1, 1965 to December 31, 1966 edition of the Office of the Chief of Chaplains Historical Review, a letter written by a teacher to the President of the United States was described. The problem arose in Germany where a chaplain attempted to introduce the Unified Curriculum at his post. The issue of the curriculum material was taken by the chaplain to the fifteen member Sunday school teaching staff for a vote. Ten voted against use of the Unified material, four voted for adopting its use and one abstained. In spite of the vote, the chaplain introduced the material into the Sunday school. He also asked for and received the resignation of the dissenting

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[5]Historical Review, July 1, 1963 to June 30, 1964, p. 77.

teachers. One of the dissenting teachers directed a letter to the President complaining. The Chief of Chaplains Office prepared the reply for the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel.

The reply consisted of a review of the development of the Unified Curriculum and the needs which led to its adoption in 1954. It was stressed that the material represented thirty-two major denominations and material selected was made by an impartial and representative board of military personnel and civilians. They also indicated in the reply that specific complaints and constructive criticism were welcomed and had led to changes over the past ten years since its institution.[6]

D. The January 1, 1967 to June 30, 1968 edition of the Office of the Chief of Chaplains Historical Review dealt with the temporary dropping of Venture magazine from the supplementary material section of the Unified Curriculum for the school year 1967-68. Venture, a publication of the United Presbyterian Church, was a magazine designed for the younger teen-age groups.

When the selection conference was held at San Diego, the thirteen consultants and publishers' representatives and the six members of the Armed Forces Religious Education Advisory Group agreed after debate to include the magazine in the 1967-68 Sunday school year Prospectus. Extreme liberal political tendencies created the reluctance to use this magazine. A sample problem was seen in the February 1967 issue which included what was considered an offensive poem dealing with the Napalm bombing on jungle villages near Hiaphong.

At a later meeting of the same committee just mentioned, it was decided to withdraw the listing of the Venture magazine. Such withdrawal would make it impossible for purchase of this magazine from appropriated

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[6] Historical Review, July 1, 1965 to December 31, 1966, p. 159.

funds. The Presbyterian Board of Christian Education reacted strongly against this withdrawal and news of the cancellation was carried on the wire services of the Associated Press. Widespread protest was evoked. The Secretary of Defense then ordered the Armed Forces Chaplains Board to countermand the decision of the Advisory Group and restore Venture to the school year 1967-68 curriculum. "Senator Gruening of Alaska rose in the Senate to call the decision of the Department of Defense to reinstate Venture 'commendable,' since not to have done so would have put the Secretary of Defense in the 'indefensible position of seeking to stifle dissent from all and every source.' At the same time he had printed in the Congressional Record the original wire service story as it had appeared in the Anchorage (Alaska) Times of 14 December 1967."[7]

The same article also included a complaint by the executive vice-president of Gospel Light Publications. The complaint was made to a Representatiive in Congress saying that the material was unacceptable to evangelical conservative chaplains and many lay teachers in the military Sunday schools. A reply similar to ones already mentioned was sent in response to the inquiry.

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[7]Historical Review, January 1, 1967 to June 30, 1968, p. 98.

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